

PERSPECTIVE

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

IN THE BEGINNING...

GOD



Welcome to Mount Vernon!

STAFF

Aaron Menikoff
Senior Pastor
aaronmenikoff@mvbchurch.org

Bryan Pillsbury
Associate Pastor/Missions
bryanpillsbury@mvbchurch.org

David Carnes
Associate Pastor/Corporate Worship
davidcarnes@mvbchurch.org

Brad Thayer
Assistant Pastor/Administration
bradthayer@mvbchurch.org

Kristine Harris
Choir Director/Administration
kristineharris@mvbchurch.org

Chip Cofer
Recreation Minister
chipcofer@mvbchurch.org

Jacob Hall
Pastoral Assistant/Youth
jacobhall@mvbchurch.org

Terry Earl
Children's Ministry Coordinator
terryearl@mvbchurch.org

Bert Neal
Administrative Assistant
bertneal@mvbchurch.org

Anne Russo
Financial Assistant
annerusso@mvbchurch.org

SERMON SCHEDULE

January 3.....*Myth 1: All Religions are True*
Galatians 1:1-10

January 10.....*Myth 2: Someone Made It Up*
Galatians 1:11-2:10

January 17.....*Myth 3: Jesus Didn't Have to Die*
Galatians 2:11-21

January 24.....*Myth 4: A God of Love Replaced a God of Wrath*
Galatians 3:1-29

January 31.....*Complaints Along the Way*
Numbers 11-12
Guest Preacher: Michael Lawrence



850 Mount Vernon Highway NW
Sandy Springs, GA 30327

Phone: 404.255.3133

Fax: 404.255.3166

info@mvbchurch.org

www.mvbchurch.org

A Conversation with...

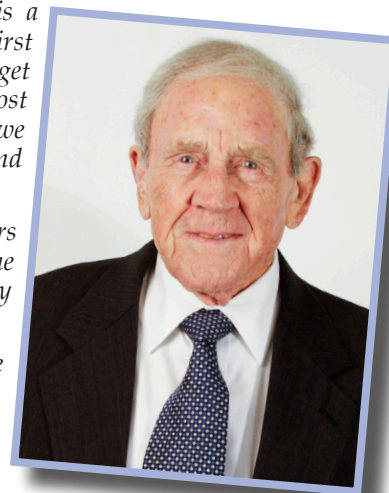
Ken Henson

This interview is slightly different from the normal leadership interviews we publish. This is a transcription of a portion of an audio interview with long-time member Ken Henson. It is the first installment in a series of interviews with Mount Vernon members. The goal in these interviews is to get to know some individual members better: their life, conversion, and time here at Mount Vernon. Most of the time is spent on their experience here at Mount Vernon. And it is through that conversation we hope to have a better understanding of Mount Vernon's history and how the Lord has worked in and through His church.

I wanted to begin these interviews with Ken Henson because he, along with a handful of other members like the Mooney's, John McCoy, Ferrell Ryan, the Wharton's, just to name a few, are some of the longest if not founding members of Mount Vernon. And within the next ten years we will probably have a church full of people that are not well acquainted Mount Vernon's beginning.

As a pastor, I want to encourage a younger generation to remember the faithfulness of and the foundation laid by brothers and sisters that have gone before us. This is in accord with the instruction of the author of Hebrews: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb. 12:1).

~Brad Thayer



When were you born? How young are you? I was born in 1921. So I'm 88 years old.

When did you come to Mount Vernon? 1965

So you've been a member for 44 years. What are some official ways you served, and what offices have you held? I've served in nearly every capacity. I've been the Sunday School Director. I've sung in the choir since I came. I served several terms as a deacon and Chairman of Deacons, Treasurer, and currently as the Assistant Treasurer.

Where are you originally from? I'm from a farm town in north eastern Arkansas. My dad was a cotton, corn, and beef cattle farmer.

So how did you come to Atlanta? After I retired from the service [US Air Force], I eventually moved here by working with Eastern Airlines. I was a pilot. And I retired from Eastern Airline in 1981.

Tell us your testimony? Shortly before going into the service, I was burdened by my sin for a long time. And while I was stationed in China, there was a tent meeting led by the chaplain. It was through his preaching at one of those meetings that I came to Christ and was baptized shortly after. (There is a fascinating story in the interview about Ken being shot at while flying a bomber during WWII.)

You came to Mount Vernon in 1965 when Forrest Garrard was the pastor. What were your first impressions of the church at that time? It was a small church plant in a rural area that needed help. The people were very friendly and welcoming. They really encouraged Stella and me. And there was a lot of good preaching. We had preaching revivals regularly back then.

As someone who has been so involved in a variety of leadership roles, you must have seen a variety of challenges the church has faced. What are some of those challenges? Financial. The church has gone through times where it's been hard financially. The church has also experienced some abuse of power and authority by leaders.

I want to go through the list of pastors since the beginning. And in just one or two sentences give me your positive impressions of each of them.

Forrest Garrard (1957-1976, 19 yrs.) Man that loved his people.

Jim Diggins (1976-1985; 9 yrs.) Good preacher.

Jim Wood (1985-1991; 6 yrs.) Good pastor and preacher. He was willing to do some things that other pastors wouldn't be willing to do. Good leader of others.

Sam Boyd (1992-2002; 10 yrs.) Good preacher

John Bryan (2005-2007; 2 yrs.) Good preacher

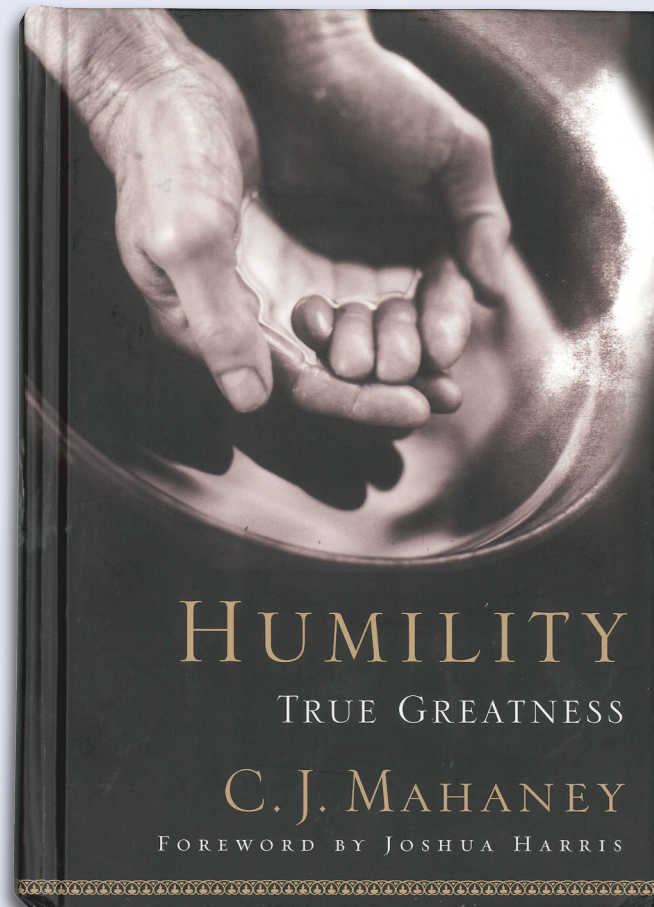
Aaron Menikoff (2008-present; 1.5 yrs.) Committed to the word and the word is going to have its way.

Has there ever been a point where you wanted to go to another church? Stella and I would talk about it now and then.

So what's motivated you to stay over all these years? We love the people here. We've loved the location and the people in this community. This is just a great place to be.

This is just a small sampling of a much longer interview. You may order of copy of this interview for \$5 by filling out a sermon envelope found in the pew racks. Write "Henson Interview" on the envelope along with your name, place it in the offering plate, and pick up your copy in the drop box on the office door the following week. It will also be available for download from the church's website (www.mvbchurch.org).

The Bookshelf



HUMILITY TRUE GREATNESS

by C. J. Mahaney

Reviewed by Brad Thayer

From a human perspective, Christianity is full of paradoxes. Just think about the logic of these examples: Jesus is God, and as the second person of the Trinity he shares eternal glory and equality with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Yet, he “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil. 2:6-7). Amazing! God became man in the person of Jesus to serve and save a sinful world. That’s why Paul went on to write, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8)! In the death of Jesus we find a paradox. The sinless died for the sinful. The righteous laid down his life for the unrighteous. The guiltless bore the punishment for the guilty (2 Cor. 5:21).

The paradoxes do not end in the person and work of Jesus. They are even found at the heart of the church’s ministry, namely the preaching of the gospel. The church is commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Yet, the message of the

gospel is foolishness to man’s wisdom. Its content is often contradictory to the axioms of philosophy. And though there may be “silver-tongued” preachers in our day and age, the simple, true preaching of the gospel is not done with persuasive words so that the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God might be demonstrated (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16).

So paradoxes are found in the person of Christianity, the message of Christianity, and in the character of Christians. Note in the beatitudes that the “poor in spirit” and the “persecuted” inherit the “kingdom of heaven.” Furthermore, the “persecuted” are considered “blessed” in their sufferings (Matt. 5:3, 10-11). Jesus went on to tell his disciples that “if anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mk. 9:35).

The examples of paradoxes from a human perspective are numerous. And pastor and author C.J. Mahaney rightly observes that, in all these ways and more, humility is true greatness. Mahaney writes not as one who is humble but as a proud sinner pursuing humility because “God has promised to give grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)” (14). “*Humility draws the gaze of our Sovereign God*” (19, author’s emphasis). This is the promise that forms the heart of his book *Humility: True Greatness*. He wants his

readers to “experience the exquisite pleasure” of God, who is “personally and providentially supportive of the humble” (21).

I hope that in all these book reviews found in *Perspective* you will be intrigued and challenged to read the books. But if I could prioritize a reading list from the books that have been reviewed, I would rate this one of the top three. In summary, it is a great source for personal discipleship. Here are three specific areas worth mentioning.

First, there is a counter-cultural message that western Christians and churches need to hear and heed. Success and recognition are often accompanied by egoistical and prideful personalities even in the church. Humility is not a natural characteristic of sinful man found in any context. Factions and divisions often arise in churches because of pride. The name of Christ is maligned in our communities, workplaces, and homes because of the boastful arrogance of those who profess Christ. Pride is our greatest enemy. And, yet, Christians of all people are to model the humility of Christ. Thus, we will do well to attentively heed Mahaney’s instruction as we live in a culture that pursues greatness with “self-interest, self-indulgence, and with a false sense of self-sufficiency...for the purpose of self-glorification” (44). Rather, consider that “humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness” (24).

Second, Mahaney asks probing and penetrating questions that cause us to examine our hearts in great depth. As a wise and sensitive pastor, he devotes the majority of his writing to application that helps us pursue humility (chapters 5-12). He wrote, “Each day you should be planning the defeat of your greatest enemy and cultivating your greatest friend” (65). Such planning is intentional and deliberate. For instance, Mahaney expounds on Paul’s example of observing God’s grace at work in the church of Corinth, a church that was full of division and tolerant of gross sin. Though Paul does exhort them at great length for their sin, he begins by saying, “I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:4). In light of Paul’s example, Mahaney asks, “Are you someone who’s quick to notice the warts in your church and much slower to catch sight of the work of God” (108)? As a means of breaking such a critical spirit, start noticing at least one evidence of God’s grace in the church each Sunday.

Other examples of this pastoral insight and care include instruction on beginning each day by reflecting on the wonder of the cross, acknowledging our need for God, expressing gratitude to God, practicing spiritual disciplines, and using our commutes to memorize Scripture and pray. Mahaney offers similar advice for how to end the day, how to take time for extended Bible studies, how to identify

evidences of grace in others, how to encourage others and pursue correction from others, and, finally, how to respond humbly to trials.

Third, it is a tour through the gospel. Pride seems to be the first sin, the core of all sins, and a sin that God passionately hates (29-35). “Pride is (after all) when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him,” wrote Mahaney (31). Its end is self-glorification. But God opposes the proud (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5), and the “proud will not indefinitely escape God’s discipline” (34).

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, however, greatness is redefined, humility is exalted, and God’s punishment for the proud is executed. Jesus exemplified true greatness as biblically defined in “serving others for the glory of God” (44). Thus, Mahaney emphasized “Jesus’ personal example of humble service” and death as our greatest need and the key to pursuing humility. “Our own service to others” he wrote, “is always both an *effect* of His unique sacrifice and the *evidence* of it” (47-48, author’s emphasis). So as you consider your service to other brothers and sisters remember that “ultimately our Christian service exists only to draw attention to *this* source—to our crucified and risen Lord who gave Himself as a ransom for us all” (48, author’s emphasis).

I should address a potential misunderstanding from this review or the book. One might think that Mahaney has emphasized the need for humility over or against the command to love. It is true that the Bible commands us to love more than to be humble. Yet, the two should not be seen in contrast but compatible with one another. They are like two sides of the same coin. Love and humility are both evidenced in service to others. And just the opposite is true. One does not love another without being humble. Consider Jesus’ words and example in John 13-15 for what this looks like.

In concluding, I want to reiterate the need for humility in the church. True humility draws the gaze of our Sovereign God, but it also draws the gaze of others. Humility is contagious and attractive. To see others overjoyed in worship because of the realization they are sinners and have a wonderful Savior makes me long for that same experience. The Holy Spirit uses the quiet faithful service of others to convict me of my own selfishness. So if you are like me, let me encourage us in two things. First, during the quiet times at the beginning of the Sunday morning services ask God to help set your heart in humble worship of Him for the humble service of Jesus Christ. Second, by the grace of God resolve in this new year to be more humble in your attitude toward other brothers and sisters at Mount Vernon. 🙏

IN THE BEGINNING...

GOD

The existence of God is self-evident. Simply look out the window. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1). God reveals himself in and through his creation. Reflecting on creation fills us with a sense of wonder that is difficult to describe. It’s the wonder of a climber who makes his way to the top of the mountain only to be overwhelmed by the majesty of the valley below. It’s the wonder of a mother who gently presses her cheek up against the flesh of a newborn baby. The climber and the mother both know they are experiencing something magnificent. Instinctively they know they are next to something grand, something wonderful, something made by God.

We search for meaning in life because we know, instinctively, that there is Someone older, wiser, and more powerful than ourselves who has made us. Only he can bring a sense of order to a world gone wild. The ancient Greeks wrote about the all-powerful Fates who held the universe in check. Zeus may thunder from on high, but he ultimately submits to Fate, a force beyond even his control. Our faith (or lack of faith) has consequences. The great playwright Euripides wrote of mortals contending with the gods but, like the pantheon, submitting to Fate. In one of his most famous plays a mother who cannot make sense of her life chooses to murder her own children. In a universe without meaning, morals eventually disappear.

Philosophers and theologians have long used the existence of morality to defend the existence of God. A personal God makes morality possible. Without a

personal creator, moral absolutes disintegrate. In *Mere Christianity*, the twentieth-century thinker, C. S. Lewis, used a moral argument to contend for the existence of a divine creator. Our sense of right and wrong, Lewis argued, should convince us that a divine Standard exists. This may not prove the Christian God of the Bible but it demands a Being who exists outside of time and space. Lewis put it this way:

I am not yet within a hundred miles of the God of Christian theology. All I have got to is a Something which is directing the universe, and which appears in me as a law urging me to do right and making me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong. I think we have to assume it is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know—because after all the only other thing we know is matter and you can hardly imagine a bit of matter giving instructions.¹

Our conscience nudges us to do good or makes us feel unsettled when we do wrong. This is evidence that we are more than flesh and blood. Whatever it is that makes us think and act and feel and know and love and sacrifice—whatever *that* is—it couldn’t have been created the way we were. Whatever that is must stand behind us, somehow making us who we are. That’s Lewis’s point. There is a law at work in our hearts, and this law is evidence of a Law-maker. The ingredients setting out on a kitchen table can’t assemble themselves into a soufflé, but the chef standing behind the kitchen table can! Likewise, our DNA can’t commend the merits of a faithful marriage, but the Creator of DNA can!

The Dutch theologian, Herman Bavinck, made an argument similar to that of C. S. Lewis. Bavinck insisted that Nature (apart from God) simply cannot explain what makes us persons who possess a conscience. Some argued in Bavinck’s day (late nineteenth century) as they do today, that life is nothing more than a biological chain of events. Bavinck called this “the materialistic theory of descent.” Such a theory cannot do justice to something as simple as altruism—the desire to do something good simply for the sake of doing good and not for the benefits it may give you:

If the materialistic theory of descent is right and thought is related to the brain as gall to the liver, then consciousness is nothing other than an accompanying reflection of some material processes in the brain, having no bearing at all on the course of events and being totally disassociated from them. World history would then have run the same course, even if man would have been devoid of consciousness and thought.²

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1952), 25.

² Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2008), 115.

In other words, if the thoughts we think are simply the mechanical workings of our brain, then what we doesn’t really matter. We are like androids operating on the basis of an algorithm embedded in our system. But if we are creatures who have been created by a divine and intelligent Being, then all else changes. We now have purpose. In that case, we are meaningful actors in a profound story.

I happen to think that the moral argument for the existence of God is a good one. In that sense, I think it *reasonable* to believe in the existence of God. There are many arguments for the existence of God and each of them shows that our belief in God is sensible. The fact that I cannot prove God exists is beside the point. There are many, many reasonable things that I simply cannot prove but I believe them anyway.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3). Everything I see and taste and touch was made by God and it “was not made out of what was visible.” This takes us all the way back to opening lines of the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). In other words, God created everything *ex nihilo* or “from nothing.” This includes men and women. We have been made. More than that, we have been made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). This means that there is something

THERE IS A LAW AT
WORK IN OUR HEARTS,
AND THIS LAW IS
EVIDENCE OF A
LAW-MAKER.

of God’s nature in us. It does not mean that we are gods! It does mean that our intellectual and emotional capacities are not random events. They are God’s plan for our lives.

As we would expect, the Bible demands faith in the Creator God. It is an assumption made by every author, from the book of Job where God asks, “Where were you

when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4) to the book of Acts where Paul preached about “a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15b), to the final chapter, where God is praised as the Creator of all things: “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things and by your will they existed and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

There are of course other reasons to believe in the existence of God. One argument was particularly influential in turning the famous atheist, Antony Flew, into a theist. It is often referred to as the “fine-tuning argument” and its advocates contend that the conditions necessary for life are too precise to be the result of a series of mechanistic, random events. The mathematician, William Dembski,

The fine-tuning argument for intelligent design begins by observing an eerie coincidence. The conditions of the universe are set precisely for the emergence and sustenance of human life. The conditions that need to be satisfied for the universe to permit human life are so remarkably exact that even a very slight variations in these conditions would result in an inhospitable world.³

Christians, of course, are not satisfied to assert the existence of “a Being of immense intelligence and power.” Our faith is in one sovereign, loving, and personal Creator who has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This means that all of our lives can rightly be lived for him. “But if a loving, infinite Person, who does have a face (which we have seen in Jesus), is behind it all, then the struggles of life can bear a profoundly different meaning! The Holy Scriptures reveal the One Who stands behind all created reality.”⁴

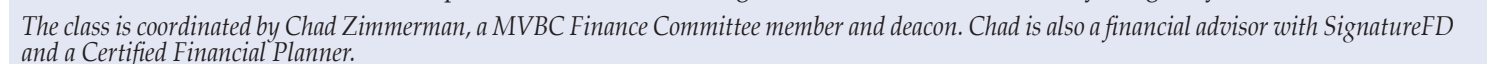
First, it means we should not be intimidated by atheism. It is simply not a credible worldview. For more on this, consider buying and reading R. Albert Mohler, Jr.'s recent work, *Atheism Remix* (Crossway, 2008). The last thing any of us should do is take a blind leap of faith into atheism.

Third, it means that the God of the Bible is true. Going back to Hebrews, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3). The Bible is one compelling Story. It begins with the creation of the universe. It moves to the introduction of sin into that universe. From here on out, the Bible is the story of redemption—first, man’s failure to redeem himself and, second, God’s provision of a Redeemer in

⁴Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change: Genesis 1:1-2:4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), 29.

~ Aaron Menikoff

<http://freetoserve.typepad.com>



sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
					1 New Year's Day Church Office Closed	2
3 6:00pm Lord's Supper	4	5	6 6:00pm Dave Ramsey's FPU starts	7	8	9
10 9:15am First Look 7:00pm Church in Conference	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 12:00pm RW&A Luncheon	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 10:30am Guest Preacher: Michael Lawrence 4:30pm Church in Conference					Youth Ski Trip	

Churchwide

New Members

Preschool

Children (1st-6th grade)

Missions

Youth (7th-12th grade)

Women's Ministry

Adults

Happy Birthday!

1 Cheryl Knight	15 Jeff Neal
Roselyn McConnell	Scott Oliver
Bob Neal	16 Louise Sweet
2 Fletcher Anderson	17 Leyna Vaughter
3 Gery Groslimond	18 Priscilla Barry
Doug Stanfield	David Dudley
5 Marian Spiceland	19 Amber Fouts
Bill Timmons	Jackie Temsamani
7 Devra Brown	21 Pat Lehman
Vanessa McCurdy	22 Bryan Pillsbury
8 Ted Noble	Brooke Reid
Pat Whitfield	Kyle Harris Timmons
9 Julie Lester	23 Brian Ferguson
Carley Tatum	Ron Kath
10 Justin Miller	24 Ashley Lowery
11 Lisa Tingle	25 Boo Elliott
12 Rachel Clark	26 Callie Henderson
13 Donna Clark	Maya Rivera
14 Sherri Austin	28 Laura Thompson
Erin Tatum	30 Candace Thayer
	31 Mikell Mitchell

Fighter Verses

Fighter Verses are strategically chosen Bible verses that help us in fighting the fight of faith. Beginning in January, we will launch a churchwide Scripture memory challenge for all ages! We will learn a new verse every two weeks. Please join us as we hide God's Word in our hearts, armed with a ready defense against the "fiery darts" of our enemy.

Fighter Verses for January

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

Deuteronomy 7:9

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Events

LORD'S SUPPER

JANUARY 3 - 6:00 PM

We will be celebrating the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection during the evening service. We encourage members to examine their hearts and relationships with one another in preparation.

DAVE RAMSEY'S FPU

JANUARY 6 - 6:00 PM

If you would like to be in control of your money, Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University is for you. The cost of the class is \$100. Wednesday night dinner will be provided for free for all participants. For more information, contact Chad Zimmerman at chad@signaturefd.com.

FIRST LOOK

JANUARY 10 - 9:15 AM

Join us for a First Look at Mount Vernon in the Mount Vernon Room. Sign up on "The Edge" of your bulletin if you plan to attend. First Look is a requirement for those interested in joining MVBC.

CHURCH IN CONFERENCE

JANUARY 10 - 7:00 PM

After the evening service, we will have a specially called church in conference to vote on new members.

CHURCH IN CONFERENCE

JANUARY 31 - 4:30 PM

We encourage all members to attend our regularly scheduled church in conference to discuss matters of the church.



850 MOUNT VERNON HIGHWAY NW
SANDY SPRINGS, GA 30327

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